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Mrs Naomi Day
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Dear Mrs Day

Short inspection of Fishbourne CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with other leaders, you have a very clear vision for the school based, appropriately, on the 'uniqueness of each pupil'. Your vision is encapsulated in the phrase, 'only one you'. This results in an unswerving mission to provide an education that enables each pupil to achieve well academically, and for them to become confident, caring members of the community. All staff support this ambition and work hard to ensure that each pupil discovers and uses their unique talents. This sense of shared purpose permeates every aspect of the school's work and dovetails with the school's Christian values.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and, also, the areas that require further development. You follow your four core principles of 'explore, prepare, deliver and sustain' in developing the process of change. Leaders consider any changes carefully, making sure that they are likely to be suitable, before implementing them across the whole school. As a result, improvements are effective and sustainable.

Strong, purposeful relationships lie at the heart of the school, which senior leaders and staff describe as 'a learning community'. Staff are actively involved in improving the effectiveness of their work and take full advantage of the many opportunities provided for training and professional development. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching over time. Morale among staff is high. All who expressed a

view said that they felt proud to be part of the Fishbourne team and enjoyed working at the school.

Pupils love coming to school. They speak with great enthusiasm about the exciting lessons that teachers plan, and how this makes learning enjoyable. Pupils behave impeccably at school. Although there are systems for helping pupils behave well, these are not usually needed, because pupils' behaviour is consistently excellent, without the need for added incentives or sanctions.

Pupils achieve well, and those currently in the school are making good progress, especially in reading and writing. Leaders have started to strengthen the teaching of mathematics, which has not been consistent in enabling pupils to achieve the high standards of which they are capable.

Parents are fulsome in their praise of the school. One, echoing the views of many, said: 'When I drop my child off in the mornings the children are always eagerly waiting for the gates to open and when they are open, the children rush to their classes in excitement.'

Leaders provide excellent support for vulnerable and disadvantaged families. They go the extra mile to ensure that pupils are safe, well cared for and achieve well. Leaders engage with external agencies robustly and, when the need arises, challenge them to do more.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff track the children's progress closely to ensure that they make the progress expected of them. Where there are dips in progress, these are spotted quickly and appropriate remedial action put in place. This provision also extends to the most-able pupils, who make good progress as a result. This rigorous tracking successfully tackled one of the areas from the previous inspection identified for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have instilled a culture of vigilance at this school. They have made sure that there is no room for complacency in this aspect of the school's work. All staff understand the central role that they play in securing pupils' well-being. Senior leaders provide regular training that equips staff thoroughly for all aspects of safeguarding. All staff notice, record and report even minor concerns. One teacher explained that their observations and records might be, 'a small piece of a much larger jigsaw that will be needed later on.'

Policies and practice match the strong culture of safeguarding and meet statutory requirements. This includes the record of checks carried out on people who work in the school, which is kept meticulously.

Pupils feel safe in school and learn how to stay safe in various situations, including when near a railway line and on the road. Leaders also place a high priority on

internet safety, equipping not only pupils but also parents with the information needed for children to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- First, we focused on how well the most able pupils achieve in writing. This was also one of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 was below the national average. Leaders have made improving writing a priority in the school this year. Staff are skilled at teaching writing because leaders have provided high-quality training to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge. Teachers plan sequences of lessons that build up the technical skills and vocabulary needed for pupils to achieve well.
- The most able pupils make good progress in writing. As pupils move through the school, their writing shows great maturity and an understanding of the impact on the reader. They show a growing command of adventurous vocabulary and write well for different purposes, adopting the right style for the reader.
- Pupils in key stage 1 get off to a very strong start in their writing. Right from the start, they learn to present their work with great care and precision, using excellent handwriting. They use accurately punctuated sentences and a good choice of words. Pupils make very strong progress in key stage 1 from all their differing starting points.
- Second, we considered how well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to achieve well in a range of subjects. Teachers plan interesting and challenging lessons for pupils. These are often supplemented with visits to exciting places or with inviting visitors to the school. Some pupils vividly recalled a large animatronic dinosaur being brought to the school.
- Leaders ensure that staff have strong subject knowledge in a range of subjects. Teachers explain ideas clearly and enable pupils to think deeply. Questioning is highly effective and helps pupils to be absorbed in their learning. For example, in science pupils in key stage 1 draw on their knowledge of the root system of plants to help them design an experiment to change the colours of the petals on a flower. They also use such vocabulary as 'nutrients' and 'anchored' to describe how roots hold plants securely in place.
- Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about how they use the whole-school 'learning experiences' to gain a range of subject-specific skills and broaden their knowledge. Pupils say that these experiences help spark their interest and encourage them to become engaged, committed learners.
- Leaders have drawn up plans to undertake a review of the wider curriculum to ensure that each subject is covered thoroughly and that pupils acquire skills and knowledge systematically across a wide range of subjects.
- Finally, we looked at the work of the governing body, including its vision and aspirations for the school. Governors share senior leaders' high expectations and play a valuable role in supporting leaders and holding them closely to account.

They have the right skills and experience to be able to fulfil their role thoroughly and help the school to continue to improve.

- Governors know the school well because they use a range of evidence on which to base their judgements. They visit the school regularly to find out about aspects of its work and to check that what they are told by leaders is accurate and seek ways of improving the school further. These visits include attending meetings with the local authority adviser, looking at pupils' work with leaders, and speaking to staff and pupils. Where there is evidence of pupils achieving less well than they should, governors question senior leaders closely and ensure that future plans address any issues identified.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the teaching of mathematics are further strengthened and built upon so that outcomes continue to rise
- the review of the curriculum further strengthens the planning of pupils' learning so that pupils build skills and knowledge systematically in a wide range of subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss various aspects of the school's work, including the school's self-evaluation. I had a meeting with the deputy headteacher and five middle leaders to discuss the curriculum, and spoke to several staff members around the school during the day. Six members of the governing body met with me to discuss their roles in the school. I also met with a representative of the local authority and spoke to a representative of the local diocese on the telephone. You and I visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, to talk to pupils and look at their work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime. Several pupils spoke with me on the playground during morning breaktime, and I had a meeting with 12 pupils from Years 1 to 6 to gather their views of the school. I also spoke with parents on the playground at the end of the day.